

THE HAIRY-NOSED WOMBAT IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

By C. F. H. JENKINS, M.A.

The Hairy-nosed Wombat (*Lasiorhinus latifrons*) is a species which once ranged widely in southern Australia and is still plentiful in parts of the Nullarbor Plain east of the Western Australian border (Troughton, 1951; Jones, 1924). Fossil bones attributable to several species of wombats have been found in local cave deposits (Glauert, 1910 and 1912), but no living specimens have been officially recorded from this State.

It is for this reason that I draw attention to a report (Crawford, 1900) concerning an expedition to "explore and report upon the large tract of country lying between latitude 30° S. and the sea coast and longitude 124° E. and the South Australian boundary." Referring to a belt of country described in his map as Premier Downs and lying south-east of Queen Victoria Spring, Crawford states—"Animal life of all kinds was much more plentiful than nearer the coast . . . In one part here we came on some very large wombat holes, and managed after a great deal of difficulty to get one out. Our native crawled into one hole, quite out of sight, and got hold of a wombat by one of the hind legs, he tried to pull him out, but could not move him, so called out to pull him back, I crawled in and got the native by the ankles and pulled, but still we could not manage, so my assistant caught me by the ankles and we all pulled, and at last got the wombat out after a hard struggle. We ate him, and although tough he was a welcome change from the tinned meat we had been living on for some time before we got him."

Support for Crawford's record occurs in the report of Mason's expedition in 1896 (Mason, 1897). Referring to country about 100 miles north-west of Twilight Cove, Mason writes: "There was every appearance of a good rainfall and we came across two small gnamma holes containing about four gallons of water. Some time ago there were numerous kangaroos and wombats, but the country was here perfectly destitute of game of any kind."

A further report comes from Mrs. A. E. Crocker of Balladonia who in August 1952 informed Dr. D. L. Serventy that wombats did not occur originally west of Eucla, but that when the rabbit invaded the area, wombats came on ahead of them and that two reached Balladonia about 1903-04.

These three independent reports concerning a creature so characteristic as the wombat, and coming as they do from the same general area, seem to indicate beyond doubt that wombats were established on Western Australian soil not so many years ago, and that a careful search may still find survivors on this side of the South Australian border.

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FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Western Silvereye Nesting in Limestone Cave.—The Western Silvereye (*Zosterops gouldi*) is a resident on the Green Islets (100 miles north of Fremantle) where it usually selects nest sites in bushy shrubs such as *Nitraria schoberi* and *Olearia axillaris*. During a visit to these islands on October 28, 1961, a nest with three addled eggs was found attached to solution tubes of small diameter near the ceiling at the back of a cave on the north side of the south island. Welcome Swallows (*Hirundo neoxena*) were also nesting in the cave.

—JULIAN FORD, Attadale.

The Spotted Scrub-Wren: A Fosterer of the Horsfield Bronze Cuckoo.—In their *Birds of Western Australia*, 1951: 249-250, D. L. Serventy and H. M. Whittell do not list the Horsfield Bronze Cuckoo (*Chalcites basalis*) as parasitising the Spotted Scrub-Wren (*Sericornis maculatus*). On August 29, 1959, at Burns Beach, a pair of scrub-wrens were seen feeding a bronze cuckoo fledgling. After a period of observation during which time no other birds attempted to feed the fledgling, the individual was collected in order to ascertain its specific identity. The basal portions of the outer tail feathers of the specimen were rufous-brown, demonstrating that it was the Horsfield Bronze Cuckoo and not the Golden Bronze Cuckoo (*Chalcites leoides*).

—JULIAN FORD, Attadale.

Waders at Mandurah.—With reference to "Notes on some Waders in South-Western Australia" by C. F. H. Jenkins (*W.A. Nat.*, 7: 201) I have seen the following lesser known waders at Mandurah.

Eastern Curlew (*Numenius madagascariensis*).—I have seen this bird in all months except July and September but only once in August (Aug. 7, 1961).

Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*).—One on January 20, 1960, near the mouth of the Estuary. Two on May 30, 1960, at Peel Inlet. Three on Feb. 4, 1961, on an open field near the Estuary. Two on November 23, 1961, at Peel Inlet.

Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*).—A party of five birds was seen during January and February 1961. A party of 20 was seen during the first two weeks of August 1961.

Grey-tailed Tattler (*Tringa brevipes*).—One on November 23 and three on December 20, 1961, at Peel Inlet.

—A. A. BURBIDGE, Mandurah.